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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 003393

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [KPKO](#) [SO](#) [ET](#)  
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA WILL PROVIDE FULL SUPPORT TO AMISOM UNTIL  
ENDF DEPARTURE, MELES

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary  
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¶1. (S/NF) Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi emphasized that the Ethiopian Government (GoE) fully supports the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and is making every effort to support AMISOM's security. He expressed hope that AMISOM can expand its forces to replace the departing Ethiopian troops. Meles added that the Ethiopian military's (ENDF) departure would be delayed, though not for long, to meet obligations to Ugandan President Museveni to support Ugandan troops should they decide to leave rather than stay in Somalia. Finally, Meles said Ethiopia fully supports a UN peacekeeping operation resolution to "blue hat" AMISOM forces, but that ENDF forces could not stay until the UN sets up full operations in Somalia. End Summary.

ENDF Fully Backs AMISOM  
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¶2. (S/NF) Prime Minister Meles made clear to the Ambassador on December 18 that Ethiopia fully supports AMISOM operations in Somalia and is not encouraging or forcing Ugandan and Burundian forces to leave. Meles said he appreciates and supports recent statements by Uganda and Burundi to stay even after the ENDF departs Somalia. In this context, Meles said Ethiopia is fully committed to continue supporting the security for AMISOM as well as assisting their repositioning up until the time ENDF forces leave Somalia. Should Uganda and Burundi decide to stay, Meles urged both countries to quickly reinforce their troops on the ground in Somalia, which the ENDF will fully support. But Meles again added that the ENDF could only support AMISOM for a short time and that Ethiopian forces will depart Somalia.

¶3. (S/NF) Prime Minister Meles said Ethiopian forces were delaying, though not for an extended period, their departure from Somalia pending the decision by Uganda to stay or leave. Ethiopia has made a promise to President Museveni to assist with the departure of Ugandan forces from Somalia should the Ugandans decide to leave. If Uganda now plans to stay on in Somalia, ENDF forces can begin to leave Somalia expeditiously. Should Ethiopian assistance be required to support a Ugandan withdrawal, Meles said he advised Museveni to do so by land and ENDF forces will provide security. It is unclear if other countries would help Uganda depart by air or sea, which

Meles said was much preferable to an overland departure.

AMISOM, Not ENDF, Can Serve As Bridge Until UNPKO Begins

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14. (S/NF) The Prime Minister said Ethiopia stayed in Somalia for the past two years in hope that AMISOM would replace the ENDF troops. But the difficulty in attracting forces to AMISOM, the financial burden of maintaining ENDF forces in Somalia, and the growing opposition to Ethiopia's involvement in the conflict in Somalia by average Ethiopian citizens -- and now the rank and file ruling EPRDF party members -- makes Ethiopia's departure from Somalia a critical priority. Meles opined that AMISOM could continue its operations in Mogadishu until UNPKO operations begin because the main threat is not from extremists or al-Shabaab elements, but from clan warfare. Meles even noted that with Ethiopian forces out of Mogadishu, and Somalia, that fighting could lessen in Mogadishu since Ethiopian forces are the main targets of some clans, such as the Ayr, as well as of extremists.

15. (S/NF) The Ambassador pressed the Prime Minister on how long the ENDF could delay or extend the pace of departure from Somalia to allow for additional AMISOM forces to enter Somalia to replace the departing Ethiopian forces. Meles replied that pending Uganda's decision, Ethiopian forces could depart expeditiously. Though the Prime Minister hinted, without giving a specific timetable and date of departure, of the logistical challenges of moving troops and equipment out of Somalia and back to Ethiopia. He was, however, very firm in underscoring that Ethiopian forces

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will leave Somalia "soon" and the international community should not get the idea that Ethiopian troops will stay until UNPKO operations are fully implemented.

Comment

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16. (S/NF) The Ugandan CHOD and Burundian Defense Minister are currently in town for discussions on AMISOM and the Ethiopians have an emergency Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) ministerial meeting on Sunday to discuss Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President Yusuf's action of selecting another Prime Minister and creating yet another crisis of confidence in the TFG leadership. The Ethiopians' strong desire to leave Somalia is tempered by their equally strong recognition that extremist elements continue to infiltrate Ethiopia, and that their departure from Somalia could limit their ability to avert this problem. In addition, Ethiopia's departure will not change the fundamental reasons which prompted their entry into Somalia in 2006 ) 1) to eliminate extremist elements or keep "off balance" anti-Ethiopian clans and elements, and 2) to set up a government which could meet the first objective and be reasonably receptive to Ethiopia. Individuals ranging from Ethiopia's CHOD and Foreign Minister Seyoum to Ethiopia's opposition and ruling party have expressed deep frustration over Ethiopia's continued operations in Somalia, not to mention the financial drain, making withdrawal an imperative despite the consequences of potentially greater instability in Somalia. We continue to gauge our Ethiopian interlocutors to see how soon and at what pace the departure of their troops will take place. End Comment.

YAMAMOTO